

Final Report

Montgomery Farms Extension 2002

The first Onsite Seminar of the Career
Success Seminars for the National FFA

New Agribusiness Entrepreneurial
Opportunities

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montgomery Farms is an agricultural entertainment enterprise that was begun in 1997 and is part of the emerging trend of specialty crops and agriculture operations that have developed in the past few years. It is part of a growing trend that is attempting to bridge the gap between those who are directly engaged in agricultural practices and the general public, and that certain percent that enjoy participating in entertaining farming activities.

Montgomery Farms and the National FFA joined forces in the spring of 2002 to provide a series of seminars to those FFA members who where interested in participating when the FFA holds its National convention in Louisville, Ky in late October. Since this was the first such activity of its kind it was not known what the response would be from the FFA membership.

The anticipated turnout was set at 1000 FFA members over a four-day period and the end result was 1100 FFA members over a three-day period. The expense incurred by Montgomery Farms was substantially offset by the USDA block grant that was awarded to us in the spring of 2002. Due to the high response to the seminars and the positive feedback from the FFA members, the National FFA leadership has requested that Montgomery Farms continue to hold these “onsite seminars” thru 2005 while they are holding the National Convention in Louisville, Ky. and thru 2012 when the **National Convention is moved to Indianapolis, In.**

It is the opinion of the National FFA leadership and Montgomery Farms that FFA membership exposure to this career success seminar will lead to an even greater attendance in 2003 due to positive “word of mouth” discussions among members.

PRESEMINAR ACTIVITIES

The travel arrangements for the FFA membership is handled by the local chapters and many forms of transit are used. To get the word out, the National FFA listed a description of the Montgomery Farms seminar on their convention web site and very importantly a reference to our web site. This gave the membership a chance to find out something about us so they could make a decision about attending the seminar. The National FFA provided transportation from the Louisville convention site to Montgomery Farms on

one of the three days and the remaining two days the FFA members provided their own transportation. Attendance did not seem to be dependant upon the chapters being supplied transportation although some members definitely appreciated the service. Since many chapters arrive at the convention in their own vans, chartered buses etc. they preferred to use their own means of transportation to travel to the seminars.

Maximum class size was set at approximately 100 participants with the intent of adjusting the class size if need be. Although several of the secessions were in excess of 100 people, no major problems were incountered.

CAREER SUCCESS SEMINARS

All FFA members were provided handouts and received approximately 30 minutes of orientation about Montgomery Farms. It was felt that this was the correct amount of time to hold the participants attention especially since additional information could be provided on the “hayride tour” portion of the seminar.

All FFA members and sponsors were allowed, at no cost, to participate in all activates such as loft swings, straw pyramids, corn box, haunted house, slingshots, cob cannons, corn/forest maze and the forest hayride and although it was daylight more then a few were subjected to the ghost of General Jessie McCormick. Length of time for the formal portion of the seminars varied between two to three hours depending upon group size and other factors but all members were encouraged to stay as long as they liked and many took us up on this offer. Attached to this report are some unsolicited comments that were received from some of the FFA members.